

BBC Learning English
Words in the news
13th August 2008
*Last farewells to Palestinian poet
Mahmoud Darwish*



Tens of thousands of Palestinians are lining the streets of Ramallah on the West Bank for the funeral of poet Mahmoud Darwish, one of the most influential cultural figures in recent Arab history. This report from Aleem Maqbool:

Palestinians will be burying **a national icon**, a man whose work was often based on his experiences of life **in exile** and under occupation that **resonated with** many. Over the decades, **he was instrumental in forging** a sense of Palestinian national identity. People **of all backgrounds** here feel they had a personal connection to Mahmoud Darwish, and pride in a man who told their story in a way they weren't able to.

Thousands would **flock to his recitals**, his poems were transformed into popular songs and used in political speeches, and the words he wrote now form part of Palestinian daily life.

But **he wasn't shy of talking of** his people's **shortcomings**. He had written **fierce criticism of the divisions among Palestinians**, believing, in some ways, what they were doing to themselves was worse than anything others had done to them.

There's little doubt his work, not just on the Palestinian cause, but on love and hope and death, will **endure** across the Arab world.

Aleem Maqbool, BBC News, Ramallah

Vocabulary and definitions

a national icon	here, someone who is uncritically admired by the whole nation (often because they symbolize or represent an idea or movement)
in exile	when someone is sent or kept away from their own country, often for political reasons
resonated with	were shared by, struck a chord/note with
he was instrumental in forging	his work was one of the most important factors that helped to form and develop
of all backgrounds	from all social classes, of different statuses and with different family histories
flock to his recitals	come in large groups to hear him read his poems
he wasn't shy of talking	he was confident enough to talk, he didn't avoid talking
shortcomings	faults, failures to achieve something
fierce criticism of the divisions among Palestinians	strong disapproval of the fact that Palestinians were not united
endure	here, last/be remembered

More on this story: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7557713.stm

Read and listen to the story and the vocabulary online:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/newsenglish/witn/2008/08/080813_darwish.shtml